

## S06E08: Remembering The Teacher: Charles H. Long (Part 1)

Jordan Loewen-Colón ([00:07](#)):

Hello, and welcome to the Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery podcast. The producers of this podcast would like to acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation, Firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.

David Carrasco ([00:29](#)):

Thank you, thank you, thank you. So thank you for all that. Now you see who the community is here. All of these people carry a part of the mantle of Charles Long going forward. And Professor Ray Carr and I are pleased to be able to present you our Charles Long. I first heard of Charles Long from my Chicago Divinity School advisor, Frank Reynolds, after the first semester at the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1968. "It's time for you to study with Charles Long," he said. "He has the method. He always begins with a text, a myth, or a story." And that's really important to understand about Charles Long.

David Carrasco ([01:14](#)):

So I went and took a class with him and I remember the first lecture. The first lecture was on the sky gods, the gods of the sky. And I can see him now speaking in Swift Hall. I remember he wore this beautiful leather coat that was Mellow Brown but with a tinge of blood red in it. And that stood out to me. I remember him gesturing upward about the sacredness of the sky and what is called the [foreign language 00:01:47]. That's the God who after he creates the world, retreats beyond our awareness. Not completely. And this God is hidden, comes back now and again, but is the [foreign language 00:02:02], the hidden God who has created the world. And I remember being so excited about this. He said, "The sky reveals itself. Its transcendence, its power, its changelessness, simply by being up there."

David Carrasco ([02:22](#)):

So I liked this slide of Charles Long and me in Mexico City. I took to Mexico City several times, and I like the fact that we're looking up. Only in this can, we're not looking up at the sky, we're looking up at the top of the Cathedral, the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City. And the other thing I like about this photograph, just to show you my relationship with him, I like the fact that he's higher on the stairs than me because he will always be higher on the stairs than me to me. And I think almost all of us who studied with him feel that way. That's why we feel such an indebtedness and a responsibility to tell his story, tell about him, what he taught, what he read, and who he was to us.

David Carrasco ([03:11](#)):

And one of the things that really impressed me was that when he spoke, he had what I call a rare musicality. And this musicality could enchant the hearers, and I never stopped listening until the day he died. And I created the Codex Charles Long. When I came here to Harvard, I collected eight of his lectures and I put him on DVDs so that my students could hear him and see him and they could get that musicality. I believe I was the first to call him the teacher. Not "a teacher." But I called him "the teacher." I never addressed him as Chuck or Charles because his identity for me was in a special category of having mastered a style of seeking, finding, and telling wisdom about the human condition.

David Carrasco ([04:14](#)):

I love this photograph too because here he is in Princeton when I was there at one of the archive meetings. He liked this title, "The Teacher." And when I called him on the phone, he would always go like this. He would answer, "Hello." I would say, "Teacher, this is David ." He'd say, "David , how you

doing man?" I said, "Teacher, you sound good. How you doing?" "Oh man, I'm doing fine." "That's good, teacher. How's Ms. Alice?" "Oh man, Ms. Alice is doing just fine."

David Carrasco ([04:47](#)):

The teacher taught us many lessons. And my daughter, Leona, I remember, who knew him almost all her life and interviewed him once for an essay she was writing, and she told me yesterday, "Charles Long facilitated my learning." And that's what he was. He was a facilitator. He was like this incredible living dynamic tool of teaching and hermeneutics. Here in short order are three lessons he taught me.

David Carrasco ([05:27](#)):

Lesson number one, the secret is in the creation story. Charles Long was an alpha man. And I know we all teach significations, but for me, you don't get Charles Long unless you teach the first book, which is Alpha: Myths of Creation. He said the creation myths held the secret of creation, and told how a particular society understood the creativity of their ancestors, of their grandmother, their ecology, and their bodies. These stories revealed, he said, how a new form of reality came into the world and required our fuller understanding. His argument with theologians as I understood it, was that we had to give pride of place not to the theologos, but the secret of creation was in the pre-logos. The deeper sources of creativity were in the beginning before the word, what black people created in the sounds, in the music, in the screams, in the laughter, in the moans. And what my man here calls the monk modes, was the poetic wisdom of their world.

David Carrasco ([06:47](#)):

Like the women in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, she writes, "The voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words." Long knew Eliade was correct, that it is only by retelling in words, dance, song and gesture, the creation story, that you can create an atmosphere, a ritual atmosphere in which people can experience and thereby know the secrets of creation. As he said in one of his first published articles called the Prolegomena to a Religious Hermeneutic, "For the Bambara, the articulation of the cosmos by the word was accomplished in order that the word would return to its original silence." Let me read it again. "For the Bambara, the articulation of the cosmos by the word was accomplished in order that the word would return to its original silence." Page 138 in significations.

David Carrasco ([08:10](#)):

Lesson number two, this country is racist to the core. I remember Charles Long saying many times this country has not come to terms yet with its racist history. People thought that all during Obama's, oh man, post-racist bullshit and so forth. And Charles Long was always saying, "In spite of all the great things that have happened, all the things the black community, the brown community has done, we still have not come to terms because this country is racist to the core." And the key to understanding, for me, lesson number two is in the word "core." In a course on the philosophy of history and Giovan Battista Vico and Gottfried von Herder, so let me tell you.

David Carrasco ([08:57](#)):

I did take seven courses with Charles Long. And one of them was on these two incredible philosophers, Giovan Battista Vico and Gottfried von Herder. So here's Charles Long, one of two African-Americans on the Divinity School faculty, and what is he teaching? Well, he's not just teaching black history and black religion. He's teaching Giovan Battista Vico and Gottfried von Herder. And I remember it was always in

the afternoon and they had these old heaters in the room that would go bang, bang, bang and shit when they came on. And there's Charles Long teaching us this thing. And the phrase that was crucial in that class, in both Vico and Herder, is the phrase, "Origins cue the structure." Origins cue the structure. I love that phrase.

David Carrasco ([09:51](#)):

A social structure, an economic structure, could evolve and change, but its core principles, its cosmovision and potency was set in place at the foundation. "And even though you may have a renovation and so forth, you got to be careful because those core potencies that attack the lives and lands of African Americans and Native Americans have a profound persistence," he said. "If they go into hiding for a while, it is only to prepare to reassert the racism," Charles Long said. They're always in play. Therefore, we have to crawl back through history. One of his favorite phrases. You have to crawl back through history and unmask the evils of the origins of the country.

David Carrasco ([10:37](#)):

He liked the civil rights movement. He liked Black Lives Matter and so forth, and these pragmatic approaches. He felt they were valuable in and of themselves. But he says, "If you fail to critique and understand the damages of the Founding Fathers and what was thrust into and throughout history, we could never change the conditions and cosmovision of racism in this country."

David Carrasco ([11:04](#)):

Why did Long take a hard-nosed approach here? Because he saw that many movement people had not thought hard enough about the mess that we were in. For Long, thought and action are not the opposite. For Long, thought was a crucial and difficult form of action, critical illuminating action. His work reminds me of what Paul Ricœur said about his teacher Gabriel Marcel. I love this phrase. Paul Ricœur says when he was a student, they used to go to Gabriel Marcel's house with a bunch of other students and they would have these long, long discussions and debates. And what Paul Ricœur, the great existentialist philosopher said, "At Marcel's house, one had the impression that thinking was alive, that it was doing the arguing. A constant dynamic approximation." And people have to understand about the history of religions. The first word in Eliade's book, *Patterns*, is approximations. And Charles Long took it and he called it the dynamic approximations following Paul Ricœur. The dynamic approximation.

David Carrasco ([12:16](#)):

I always like this photograph too. Let's see. I like this photograph of Charles Long, not only because he's upright and he's strong, but he's got his hand, his fist on those books. He's got his hand, his fist on those books, man. And he's looking right at you, man. He's looking right at you.

David Carrasco ([12:32](#)):

Lesson number three. I'm coming to the end. The only hope for a new creation myth lies with the people who underwent the oppression of colonialism. Charles Long called those people who underwent the oppression of colonialism, colonizer watchers. I love that. Yeah, colonizer watchers. And they're the only ones who know enough to reveal the resources that emerged out of the tragic encounters, and use these resources to make a new world for everybody. He said, "The people who did the oppression will not do it and cannot do it."

David Carrasco ([13:17](#)):

Long's three messages to me were shared with Mexicans during our several trips to Mexico. The Mexicans understood the power of the creation myth, the core of the problem, and where to turn for the making of a new world. Here are the words from Mexico's national treasure, Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, sent to me when he heard that Charles Long had passed away. This is Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, the man who excavated the great Aztec temple and became the single most powerful archeologist probably in Mexican history, and is considered a national treasure. And I took Charles Long to these conferences in Mexico and man, it got to the point where the Mexicans said, "Hey man, don't come unless you bring Charles Long. We're glad to see you, but we want Charles Long there." So we'd have these meetings at the Great Temple and Charles Long would be there. Here's what he wrote.

David Carrasco ([14:16](#)):

Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. "Charles Long is one of those academics who leave a profound mark on human thought. I met him at our Mesoamerican Archive meetings and was always impressed by his intelligence and the marvelous ways of expressing what he thought. We Mexicans waited impatiently for him to speak because we knew that wise words would come out of his mouth. I thank my brother, David Carrasco for inviting Charles, as we learned a lot from him. Thank you, Charles Long."

David Carrasco ([14:55](#)):

When my son was born, I pondered over calling him either Mircea, or Carlos for Charles, or Octavio for the Mexican writer Octavio Paz. I decided on Octavio to link him to his Mexican heritage and to a great poet. But as I pondered his name, I remembered Charles Long's great essay called Silence and Signification that the front of... Great book. And it begins, Charles Long quotes this phrase from Pascal's Pensées. "The eternal silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me." Perhaps it was because, of the many people here, of the infinite space, labor, and love necessary to raise a beloved children, I decided to give Octavio the middle name of Pascal as a code word for Charles Long. So his name is Octavio Pascal Charles Long Carrasco.

David Carrasco ([16:06](#)):

Charles Long gave me many lessons. He will always be my teacher and the teacher of my students. And I really also would like to show you this photograph of someone who's not here but was also a great student of Charles Long. On the right, that's Lindsay Jones, the wonderful Lindsay Jones who died of cancer I think in his fifties. But Lindsay Jones was one of the great students. He was my student, and I sent my student to study with Charles Long. And he became the editor-in-chief of that fifteen-volume Encyclopedia of Religion, Lindsay Jones. So that's my sort of statement about Charles Long and it's a great pleasure to turn the floor over to Ray Ray. Ray Ray, Ray Ray. Here he comes. Ray Ray.

Jordan Loewen-Colón ([17:00](#)):

Do you need help catching up on today's topic or do you want to learn more about the resources mentioned? If so, please check our website at [podcast.doctrineofdiscovery.org](http://podcast.doctrineofdiscovery.org) for more information. And if you like this episode, review it on Apple, Spotify or wherever you listen to podcasts. And now back to the conversation.

David Carrasco ([17:18](#)):

So I was talking about how I met you the first time.

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Raymond Carr ([17:18](#)):

Yeah, you want to do that? Yeah.

David Carrasco ([17:18](#)):

Of course, [inaudible 00:17:24].

Raymond Carr ([17:18](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Okay.

David Carrasco ([17:24](#)):

So what happened was we used to have this meetings every year, the AAR, and Phil was saying that this group, after the presentation, it was really a way for us to get together with Charles Long at the AAR, and we used to have these great things. And so I met Ray Carr there. I always knew him because he had these cool hats. But I never clicked and knew his name.

David Carrasco ([17:49](#)):

So when Charles Long was dying, it was the last month or so of his life, I called him up. "Hey teacher, it David ." "Oh David , how you doing?" And he said to me, he said, "David , man, I want to go out and look at the sun and listened to the wind." He said, "Man, listen. Have Ray Ray call me." I said, "Okay man." But I wasn't going to say I don't know who Ray Ray is. So I called up somebody else and I said, "Hey man, the teacher wants to see Ray Ray. Who is Ray Ray?" He goes, "Oh, that's Ray Carr. You know? The guy with a cool hat." So I called him on his phone number and I called him up and I said, "Man, Charles Long is asking for you."

Raymond Carr ([18:33](#)):

No, tell him how you said it, really.

David Carrasco ([18:33](#)):

What did I say?

Raymond Carr ([18:35](#)):

He called me up and said, "Hey Ray Ray, how you doing man?" Like he knows who I am. So then I found out later. Somebody told me, "Yeah, David called me. He didn't know who you were."

David Carrasco ([18:45](#)):

And you take it from there, man.

Raymond Carr ([18:51](#)):

One of the things that... I left Pepperdine a few years ago, and I'm back at Pepperdine now. But when I left Pepperdine and I was looking for a place I could go to, and Charles Long said to me, he said, "I need to get you over there with David ." So there's a sense in which in his death, he got me up there with David . And so we've been together since-

David Carrasco ([19:09](#)):

[inaudible 00:19:09] for a year. Okay.

Raymond Carr ([19:09](#)):

You all right. I like that hat too.

Davíd Carrasco ([19:10](#)):

Thank you, man.

Raymond Carr ([19:14](#)):

All right. How you doing? Today we're going to start off by watching a video that gives some background on the Long papers. Even though we've had the papers now since 2021, we're still at the beginning of this. When we talk about Long papers, it's... Which makes sense. And I'll say some things about that in my talk here because there's a sense in which Long's papers, like Long, resists categorization. And you'll see a little bit of this here, and so I want you to watch this together with us.

Davíd Carrasco ([19:47](#)):

Let me turn down the lights.

Raymond Carr ([19:54](#)):

All right, brother. And this is a distillation of a talk we did at Harvard in 2023, that video.

Video ([20:33](#)):

What did they find?

Video ([20:33](#)):

They found the [inaudible 00:20:19].

Video ([20:33](#)):

Yeah, and always got it broken up.

Video ([20:33](#)):

Black scholars, objectivity.

Video ([20:33](#)):

See when you're thinking, "Oh, what does that say?" [inaudible 00:20:31]. Because somebody wrote it, but I don't know whose writing. Somebody wrote this stuff in here, but this is him.

Video ([20:36](#)):

Yeah, this is him right here.

Video ([20:40](#)):

I can tell.

Video ([20:40](#)):

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Man, so you want to keep those?

Video ([21:09](#)):

Yeah, right there. So I just thought we could...

Video ([21:09](#)):

Some of stuff is just rich in here. So rich.

Video ([21:29](#)):

Oh, there's so many little note papers like that everywhere.

Video ([21:32](#)):

This is where he would sit too.

Video ([21:33](#)):

Yeah, he would come out here and smoke. Yeah.

Video ([21:38](#)):

Yeah, he would just sit out and smoke.

Video ([21:38](#)):

Dazing and reflecting and everything right here. A lot of hours.

Video ([21:38](#)):

You okay, Ray Ray? He went bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang.

Video ([21:38](#)):

Did you see that shed over there? That shed, it's an opening to another world.

Video ([22:07](#)):

It is. It is.

Video ([22:07](#)):

[inaudible 00:22:08].

Video ([22:07](#)):

Yeah, that's what Robert said.

Video ([22:12](#)):

When you come out, it could be the year 2050. Maybe you're only in there an hour, but when you come out, it's 2050.

Video ([22:19](#)):

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There's Black folklore in there or something?

Video ([22:19](#)):

Yeah, okay.

Video ([22:20](#)):

Those file cabinets [inaudible 00:22:28].

Video ([22:44](#)):

Yeah, no doubt.

Video ([22:45](#)):

Listen to this. Here's what he underlined. God's love for the world is taken seriously seems to suggest that there are things which are generally not himself, whose activities are not completely determined by his agency.

Video ([22:59](#)):

Oh wow.

Video ([22:59](#)):

[inaudible 00:23:01]. That's what he liked.

Video ([23:03](#)):

Yeah. He liked that stuff.

Video ([23:05](#)):

Not determined by his agency. That is God's agency. Who wrote this man? William Christian.

Video ([23:12](#)):

[inaudible 00:23:14].

Video ([23:36](#)):

Now take it back so you can show it to me.

Video ([23:38](#)):

Look over there, man.

Video ([23:40](#)):

Huh?

Video ([23:42](#)):

What is that, David ?



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Video ([23:44](#)):

Well, this is a 1948 journal of [inaudible 00:23:47] before he did his PhD, and there's all these articles, but he's got all these underlines.

Video ([23:52](#)):

So you can see how he reads.

Video ([23:52](#)):

He's telling you how he reads.

Video ([23:58](#)):

We're just talking about the process of how we might deal with the papers and establishing something, an archive, with all daddy's papers. So now we're just kind of thinking about A, what would go, and that's really up to you.

Video ([24:23](#)):

Everything would be on the table to go?

Video ([24:31](#)):

No.

Video ([24:31](#)):

Okay.

Raymond Carr ([24:32](#)):

Thought you all would appreciate that. I just want to... Thank you. Thanks to my wife, Joy Carr, who actually filmed a lot of that and did this work that you see in setting everything up and catching David in rare form also. And then I also want to acknowledge Mrs. Long. She died this year and she wanted to live to be 100. She didn't quite make it, but that was her wish. And she said she didn't know how Charles lived so long because he did all the wrong stuff. When she was in her nineties, she had a trainer. Her grandson was her trainer, so she was working really hard to be healthy and she ended up having dementia and she passed away. But it was wonderful to watch them interact. He called her Freeman because that was her family's name. And so I got to spend time with them also in hospice. So I got to share some really special moments with them.

Raymond Carr ([26:21](#)):

For me, Charles Long is not an intellectual object. He's, for me, a radical human being that I've had to think with, come to terms with, and I'm deeply grateful for what he's meant to me and my work, what he means for me and my wife's work. And so I'm going to share a few things with you tied to that. And I call this piece Residuum, or some people would say Residuum, the Shed and the Office and Charles Long at 100. He'll be 100 this coming year.

Raymond Carr ([26:57](#)):

As I wrestle with what to say to you today, in light of taking religious phenomenology seriously, especially as articulated by Charles Long, I was reminded that in order to wrestle with Long one has to go back into the mess. And as you all know, he uses different language for that. That is how he got into the heart of the matter. That is, by entering the messiness of life, the messiness of thinking or what he might call the stuff, that stuff. And other terms, he used phrases like going back into the water or crawling back into the past, where the water itself becomes a mnemonic structure addressing water with its structuring capacity and its relationship to this stuff. Of course, all this reminds me of Long's penchant for periodizing. I'm sorry. Maybe I need to get the gum from under my tongue. For periodizing the world in various ways. For example, he sometimes periodized using bodies of water. He used the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific.

Raymond Carr ([28:03](#)):

And by the way, I remember once I was parked beside the Pacific in Malibu and I called up Dr. Long, and I said, "Dr. Long, now look. I've heard you talk about the Mediterranean and I've heard you talk about the Atlantic with rationality and notions of freedom and slavery." I said, "But I've never heard you talk about the Pacific." You have to excuse the language, a little ribaldry in this. He said, "Oh, shit." He said, "The Pacific? It's a booger bear." He said, "It's twice as deep as the Atlantic, twice as big." He said, "There are volcanoes, the Mariana Trench, there's a ring of fire." He said, "You mess around, an island might pop up." He said, "Now, they mastered the Mediterranean. They mastered the Atlantic. But the Pacific? It'll whip their ass."

Raymond Carr ([28:50](#)):

Anyway, so I thought that was quite intriguing here. So he would use these bodies of water in that way. Then there's a periodization which occurs in Significations in his book, which will also be the 40th anniversary this coming year. He periodized the world according to what he called mythic cycles, framed as sites of fecundity or important revelatory junctures in the American experience. He stated that from 1776 to 1860s, almost a hundred years, and from the Civil War to the 1960s and 1970s, is another a hundred-year cycle.

Raymond Carr ([29:26](#)):

So what struck me to question, what would it mean to think of Charles Long at 100? Next year on August the 23rd, 2026 will be his 100th birthday. And so what would it mean to come to terms with Long's thinking at 100? What would it mean to wrestle with this moment as a mythical cycle? In fact, as Dr. Carrasco noted in the video, you go into Long's shed, you may come out about 50 years later, a fact which puts us right into one of those 100 year mythic cycles, in a sense.

Raymond Carr ([29:57](#)):

The first thing that came to mind, however, is that when we wrestle with Long, one of the things we have to think about is this following quote tied to the mythic cycles. I want you to hear this quote from Long. He said, "At each one of these mythic cycles, the opportunity is present for a change in the ritual, for a break in the repetition of this kind of eternal return. It was present in 1776, and then again in the bloody civil war, and then again in the 1960s with the Kennedys and Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. But at each one of these junctures, the American Revolution is aborted, and clever priests of our national language and apparatus skillful in the ways of ritual, purity, and manipulation, come upon the scene to ensure the repetition of the American ritual." It's a sharp critique of that repetition that we are enduring today.

Raymond Carr ([30:52](#)):

It made me wonder what would Long say to the burgeoning phenomenologists who has to deal with these clever priests? What would Long say to those of us wrestling with the religious datum, those of us who are still coming to terms with religious orientation and this power to convey meaning? In other words, what might the shed, the office, and Charles Long say to us as we deal with America as a hermeneutical situation?

Raymond Carr ([31:17](#)):

First what stood out to me was how Long truly worked as a bricoleur, a fact that gave meaning to my own thinking in wrestling with Carl Barton, James Cone. Long once asked me in Memphis, he said, "How did you come up with that Barton and Monk thing?" He then stated that he had considered writing a book on Carl Barton and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who popularized the term bricoleur, which is one who improvises with the tools at their disposal, who creates in this kind of way. And I thought of this improvisational aspect as I surveyed his office, there were only two items on the wall. I can't say pictures because they weren't just pictures. One was a picture of his teacher, Joachim Bach, his doctor father. The other was an African mask.

Raymond Carr ([32:04](#)):

Long, at the end of his life, was still signifying. He did it to Carl Barton when he visited in 1962. He said, "What do you think about this strange place called the United States?" He did it with James Cone when James Cone had just finished his first book. Came by his house, Cone said he looked at him with a sly smile. Or gave him a sly look, actually, is the term they used here.

Raymond Carr ([32:26](#)):

Signify. As Charles E. Winquist notes in his Preface to Signification. He said that, "Long is not simply imposing a hermeneutical problem on epistemology. He deepens an epistemological sensibility that is implicated in the realities of contact and exchange. He is a thinker of the coarse and fine-grained complexity of religious and cultural meaning."

Raymond Carr ([32:53](#)):

Implicit among other books, on the top of the books in the house, was an order underneath. So it says improvisation, but then there was this order underneath things. Not a categorization, but a system that ordered the books in terms of the subject matter and location rather than strict taxonomy. He once told me that. He said, "My books are not arranged in that way. I go to one book, I'm looking for one. Then I'll see the other and I'll use that." Improvising on the categories, in a sense. This included file cabinets that you saw in the video and other boxes that contained floppy disks and other intellectual artifacts of the past. The desk itself was makeshift. It was a piece of flat wood that sat on top of cabinets. And then I'm deeply reminded of the yellowish nicotine-stained residue on top of the books.

Raymond Carr ([33:45](#)):

Indeed, I remember telling a joke in front of Dr. Long, and this is how that applies in some ways. It gets you at who Long was. I remember someone said that they had an old copy of Significations, the red copy. Some people remember that red cover on Significations. And so they said they had a copy of that and I stated, "Now, you haven't gotten a real copy yet." He said, "Well, what's a real copy?" And then Dr. Long was sitting there listening. I said, "Real copy is when you get the one from him, and you get the

book and you open it up and a plume of smoke comes up out of the book." Something akin to the Smoke of the Temple of the Old Testament. Oh, he got a good laugh out of that.

Raymond Carr ([34:21](#)):

But there were other things. There were multiple computers, CDs, floppy disks, even eight tracks. Oh, and some romance novels. I still couldn't figure those, how they fit. But they were all there. In fact, when we moved Long's papers and books, it was over 200 boxes of papers and books that we have. Still wrestling with that material. And then as you go outside at his house, you walked into the shed, a space that the family rarely entered. As you journeyed into the shed, you entered another world. It was like where Long talks about Africa as a historical reality and religious image, where the shed was something similar. It was almost eschatological when you went into the shed. There were cobwebs and there were old Mayflower boxes that folded under their own weight.

Raymond Carr ([35:12](#)):

And it often contains these, not just file cabinets, but these kind of brown files on them. You have these kind of brown files like this old school file where he had written on the copy. But there were also these yellow notepads and the yellow notepads were rarely completed. And I noticed that when you follow some of his talks, you'll follow his lecture and then the lecture will break off on and Long is improvising the rest. One of the things I learned is that Long had two family members who had this really powerful memory. And so when you see his books, rarely are there citations. There's these little yellow notes that reminded him of what he was interested in. I found that deeply intriguing.

Raymond Carr ([35:58](#)):

What I want to suggest with this, which brings me to the second point in relation to this kind of improvisation, this bricoleur type idea, is that what stood out to me in all of this is that I was working with a person as a site who resists categorization. Long's thinking, even Long's workspace embodies a materiality, a stuff that resists. Even as I think about how to come to terms with a process to deal with the residue, I stand face to face with the caveat that bids me never to distill Long's contributions to such a degree that I make it too neat. That's his critique of Joseph Washington. It's too neat in his critique of African-Americans.

Raymond Carr ([36:41](#)):

Still, that was part of the experience of reading, knowing and coming to terms with Long. With this experience, one is left with a kind of. Now I didn't say degree, but a kind of residue, which reminds me of his advice when I was writing *Theology in the Mode of Monk*, which are these three volumes that I released. He said, "Now, I want you to read *Sinus and Signification*." He said, "Now, when you read it, don't analyze it. He said, let it perfume what you're doing." And anybody that knows Long knows he uses that language, that phraseology of perfuming. I love this idea of let it perfuming. The perfuming was a kind of, again, a reminder and a way of wrestling with the remainder, which gets at the topic I've chosen, why it's important to talk about this residuum and the way we can be creative in relationship to the past.

Raymond Carr ([37:32](#)):

In other words, there's an extent to which Long gives way to a, not just a resistance to the past, but also a wonderful kind of creativity. I remember him sharing with me in his colorful style. He once said to me, he said, he rattled off this question, "Who came up with this east and west stuff? Who gets to decide

what's east and west?" And then as I was, this past semester, teaching the ancient Near East and the text, I could hear Long saying, "Who decided on the east and the west?" And that's decided by its relationship to the West or to the European. And so it led me to wrestle with that question in very creative ways as I taught students about the Hebrew Bible.

Raymond Carr ([38:17](#)):

And part of what that led to me in terms of its creativity, it helped me to see the Bible in its relationship as a literary project itself, as being too over determining. Where is the oral? How do we get in touch with this? These are part of the reasons I, in my work, deal with theology in the mode of monk. I want to wrestle with not just the visual, but I want to see how sound itself impacts the way we think about theology.

Raymond Carr ([38:44](#)):

So Long, in my life, has given a way to a wonderful kind of theopoetics that honors the richness of the oral tradition we see in the African-American tradition, and is here that I think that as we think about his way of being a bricoleur and improvising, his way of wrestling with categories, and how that gives way to a new kind of creativity of how that could bless us in this space. So I hope that the young phenomenologists in the room who are using and trying to think along with Long will keep these things in mind as you too wrestle and wade into the residual. All right, thank you.

Jordan Loewen-Colón ([39:14](#)):

The producers of this podcast were Adam, DJ Brett and Jordan Long Colon. Our intro and outro is Social dancing music by Oris Everett and Regis Cook. This podcast is funded in collaboration with the Henry Luce Foundation, Syracuse University and Hendricks Chapel, and the Indigenous Values Initiative. If you like this episode, please check out our website and make sure to subscribe.